

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

The above is a photo of myself and Mr. X's artist Seth at the convention in Chicago this summer. Thanks to Ken Stacy for taking the photo and sending it to me! Oh yes...those aren't my beers! I think we were all watching Mike Kaluta dancing, but I could be wrong.



If the glitz and glamour we see on **Dallas**, **The Colbys**, and **Falcon Crest** and the other fastlane primetime soap operas are the keys to knowing whether one is living an exciting life or not, then I am forced to believe my life has been mousey this summer. It seems that all I do is work, work, work...pedal my bike past the sunny beach on my way home; relax by sitting on the lawn watching the kittens do kittenish things; and find myself enjoying the warm dark evenings thinking sanguine thoughts.

According to TV standards, I must be living a hard, empty life of work and empty reverie. So why do I feel terrific?!

Maybe there's something wrong with my Neilson rating.

But seriously folks: I must share with you a sense of contentment that has developed slowly, languorously over the last year. There has been marvelous progress. True, my life is a tad more complicated since I bought my first-ever car, but the heady freedom my own wheels afford is well worth the extra expense and responsibility. The office, as well, felt the kiss of progress. I now have a pair of part-time assistants who come in and do typing, subscriptions, and such things. Jennifer, an art student, started in the summer and has brought some organization to this place. Terence, who just began a few weeks ago, picked up the slack when Jen returned to school. Peter comes in once a week to take the unfacilitated shipping off my hands. I must admit that having a "staff" feels both good (nice to have someone here) and bad (I hate having to feel responsible for being here). But growth, I'm told, is a Good Thing, a condition required for ordinary survival: so I buckup under the groaning weight of corporate responsibility, as I seek ways to improve Renegade.

I'm looking for new, non-comicshop distributors, and hope to do some repackaging of titles already in existence: to sell them outside the usual comic market.

I've come to realise, in the past year, that my tastes will never coincide with those currently prevalent in the comic market. That is no doubt why Renegade titles seem to be slightly more unusual than most of what sells well in this topsy-turvy, turbulent period of market instability. As I've said before, we may not be burning up the track with our sales figures, but I'm content; Renegade stays in business, it grows at a steady pace, and above all else, I can take the chances that make life interesting. Yes, for the time being I'm being content with the way things are turning out. I'm back home in California; I'm doing what I enjoy; I'm working with creative people; and as my self-confidence takes root, life grows more interesting daily.

I hope that your summer was as healing and productive as mine.

Deni

Ms. TREE

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MAX COLLINS and
TERRY BEATTY'S

Ms.

TREE™

33
OCT

200
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Renegade
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Ms. TREE

"RUNAWAY II"

Chapter Three

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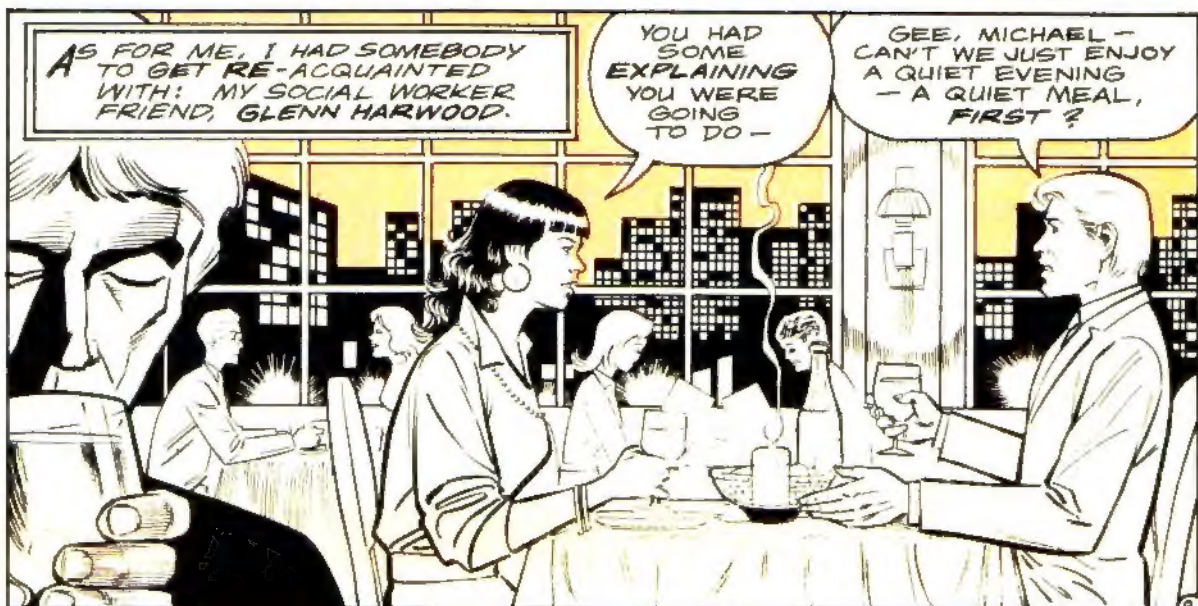
and Terry Beatty

AND SO TO BED...

WHEN I APPROACHED HER FOR INFORMATION ON THE SUPPOSED SUICIDE OF HER FRIEND AND PEER BETTY EDEN (A. K. A. CINDI DUZIT), PORN "GODDESS" TRACEY LYNN HIRED ME TO PROTECT HER FROM HER MOB-CONNECTED FORMER PRODUCER, UNTIL THE STAR'S OWN PRODUCTION COMPANY WAS UP AND RUNNING...

A BODYGUARD ASSIGNMENT? YOU PULLED ME OFF AN ONGOING MISSING PERSONS INVESTIGATION FOR A BODYGUARD ASSIGNMENT?

BEFORE YOU GET TOO INDIGNANT, DAN, WHY DON'T YOU TURN AROUND AND HAVE A LOOK AT THE BODY YOU'LL BE GUARDING?





NO.



EVERYTHING'S
BUSINESS WITH YOU,
ISN'T IT ?

"NOT AT ALL," I SAID.
"I'VE BEEN ACCUSED
OF NEGLECTING
BUSINESS IN FAVOR
OF PURSUING
PERSONAL CONCERNS.
BY YOU AMONG
OTHERS —"



LIKE THE TIME I WENT
TO A CERTAIN SOUTHERN
COLLEGE TOWN, LOOKING
FOR A CERTAIN
RUNAWAY BOY —

I WAS NEVER CRITICAL
OF YOUR CONCERNS,
MICHAEL, OR OF YOUR
GETTING
INVOLVED —

"I WAS LESS THAN
THRILLED WITH YOUR
METHODS, I'LL ADMIT —"

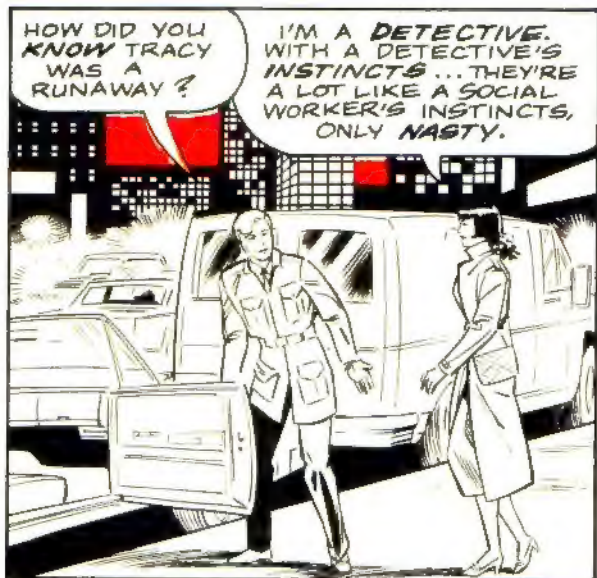


I THINK I KNOW
WHY YOU'VE COME
TO THE BIG CITY,
GLENN — YOU'RE
PURSUING A
RUNAWAY, JUST
AS I WAS —

YES,
I AM —

"AND THAT RUNAWAY,"
I SAID, "IS NONE
OTHER THAN
TRACEY LYNN
HERSELF —"





HOW DID YOU
KNOW TRACY
WAS A
RUNAWAY?

I'M A **DETECTIVE**.
WITH A DETECTIVE'S
INSTINCTS... THEY'RE
A LOT LIKE A SOCIAL
WORKER'S INSTINCTS,
ONLY **NASTY**.



TRACEY LYNN LOOKS LIKE A WOMAN,
TO SAY THE LEAST - BUT SOMETHING
STRUCK ME AS **OUT-OF-SYNC** ABOUT
HER FROM THE MOMENT I MET HER -

"YOU HAVE TO LOOK **PAST**
THE MAKE-UP AND THE
IMPOSSIBLE PHYSIQUE -
YOU HAVE TO LISTEN TO
HER **SPEAK**, AND CHECK
OUT HER **MANNERISMS** -"



THEN YOU SEE IT.
SHE'S NO WOMAN.
SHE'S A KID -
A **TEENAGER** -



THAT'S **EXACTLY** WHAT
SHE IS. AND HER MOTHER
WANTS HER BACK HOME -



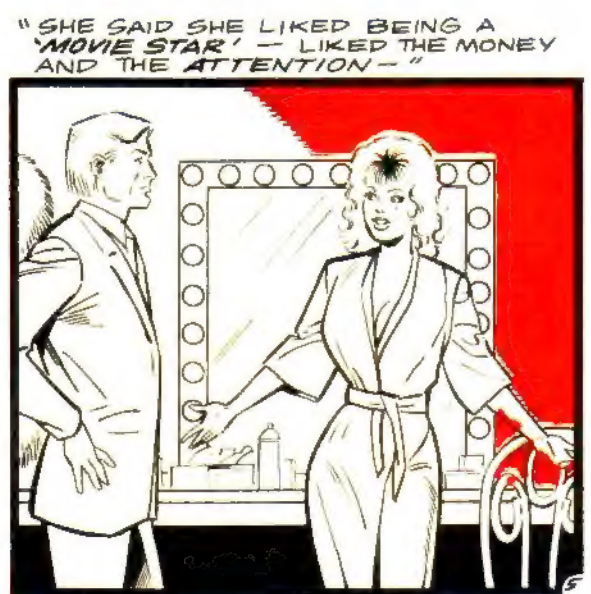
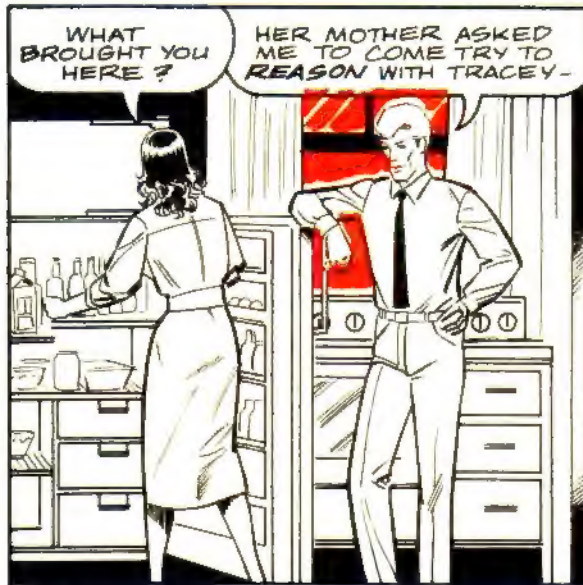
WHAT ABOUT
HER
FATHER?

THE FATHER'S DEAD.
THE MOTHER IS VERY
MIDDLE-CLASS - WORKS
FOR AN INSURANCE
AGENCY.

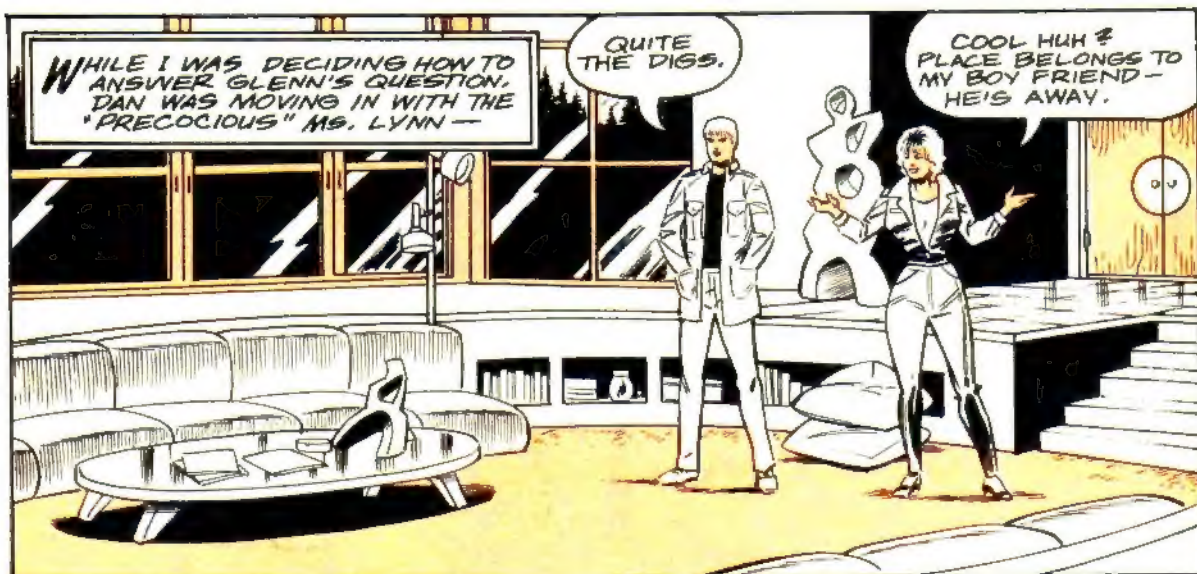


HOW OLD
IS
SHE?

SHE WAS FIFTEEN WHEN
SHE RAN. SIXTEEN OR AT
MOST SEVENTEEN WHEN SHE
BROKE INTO DIRTY MOVIES -







WHILE I WAS DECIDING HOW TO ANSWER GLENN'S QUESTION, DAN WAS MOVING IN WITH THE "PRECOCIOUS" MS. LYNN —

QUITE THE DISS.

COOL HUH? PLACE BELONGS TO MY BOY FRIEND — HE'S AWAY.



MUST BE PRETTY GOOD MONEY IN PORN.

YEAH, BUT EDDIE MAKES HIS MONEY OFF COKE, MOSTLY.



"BITCHEN" CROWD YOU RUN WITH.

FOR SURE, YOU WANNA DO A FEW LINES?



NO THANKS. I'M GOING TO CAMP OUT ON THE COUCH HERE —

HOW COME YOU KEEP SUCH A DISTANCE? YOU THINK I'M... UNATTAINABLE... 'CAUSE I'M A MOVIE STAR?



OR MAYBE YOU DON'T THINK I'M A MOVIE STAR AT ALL — JUST A LITTLE WHORE —

YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK ? I THINK YOU'RE MY CLIENT, AND I JUST MET YOU.



AND I THINK YOU OUGHT TO GO TO BED, AND SKIP THE NOSE-CANDY NIGHTCAP, WHILE YOU'RE AT IT —



I THINK YOU'RE MEAN—



I LIKE THAT IN A MAN.



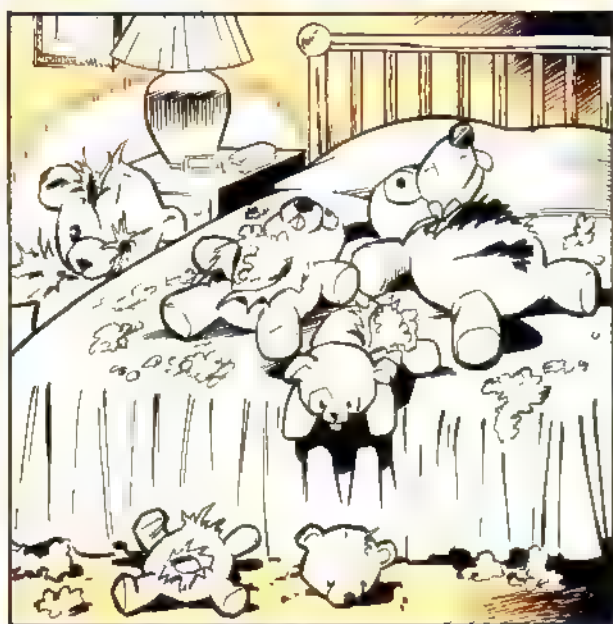
OY.





WHAT IS IT?

MY... MY ANIMALS!



I DON'T THINK WHOEVER DID THIS IS STILL HERE — BUT I'LL SEARCH THE PLACE —

MY ANIMALS...



DAN, I'M SCARED —

THAT'S THE POINT OF THE EXERCISE, I'M SURE — BUT I'M HERE, KID. I'M HERE.



CONTINUED THIS ISSUE



Address all letters of
comment to

SWAK

P O BOX 1007
MUSCATINE, IA
52761

Dear MS TREE men,

For some reason I keep reading this comic book in bunches. First I read the *Eclipse Magazine* stories (the issues I could get), then the *Thrilling Detective Adventure* stories I wasn't that thrilled so I dropped the comic. But I picked up some back issues at a convention. And when Dan Green got blown up at the end of #6, I was hooked (I swear these puns are unintentional) and rushed to the local comic book shop to get the next issue. Now due to uneven distribution and a trip out of the country I just now acquired some back issues, and was able to read issues 13-27 in one sitting (Now that I think of it this comic is a natural to read in bunches - I'm not gonna read issue 20 without 19's clues).

First of all I love the duo-tone. Especially the blue - I'd like to see green and orange. You might think I'm nuts, but duo-tone reminds me of Herge's TINTIN. When I was a kid, my dentist had some magazines or books or something in the waiting room with TINTIN in it, and I'm sure it was in duo-tone. And they alternated colors every few pages - could you do that? (How about lavender?)

The stories have been a little hit and miss with me. I love the current storyline. The mid-teen issues seemed too blatantly inspired by today's headlines (Gacy, Goetz, Vanessa Williams). And I was disturbed by the end of #17. Certainly I respect your right to an artistic decision. But when MS TREE started, I saw her as a sympathetic protagonist, and I wasn't sure you didn't still see her that way. I was really bothered by Glenn Harwood's under-reaction to the situation - I want to kiss you, if it weren't just for that pesky murder I witnessed you commit. A guy as compassionate as he should've reacted more like - me, I guess.

But the advantage of reading this many issues in a row is that I see where you're heading. Ms Tree going around offing people - she wasn't this blood-thirsty back in *Eclipse Magazine* - and seeing Muerta people everywhere. Getting a 12-year-old kid to lie to the police about her killing a pornographer. Letting Mike Jr. virtually witness a cold-blooded murder. These aren't things well people do. Now you're presenting that side of the story. The justice-seeker in me still thinks she gets away with murder. Literally, a little too often. (I do hope the real Chicago police aren't this ineffective.) But I guess if she were locked up from #26 to issue #206, it wouldn't be that interesting.

I must say you've got the liveliest letters section in comics. Kind of reminds me of the old *Captain America* letters page. Sticking my 2 cents in. I think the average TV show is superior to the average comic book, by far, but by no means is TV inherently the better medium in which to tell a story. On the other hand, TV has the bigger bucks so it can hire better talent, theoretically. But you can't collect TV shows. (Actually I'm on Volume V of "Mary Tyler Moore" reruns.) I think many of your letter writers have a point in saying that society is too permissive. Morals are too loose. Then again, I think it's way too easy to be judgmental and close-minded. I kind of wish that people would be a little more restrained in their sexual proclivities, but I certainly don't feel I can say what to do or not to do. The same thing with abortion - where my views are actually the same as Ms Tree's - probably the only time they coincide.

By the way I don't think it's fair for you to say "it's only a story" - particularly in this genre where the whole idea is to notice details. Why is it a clue that Melissa Marquis said she could recognize the driver of the car behind her, but an inconsequential nitpick that Linda Wilers' daughter shouldn't be old enough to drive?

In closing, I'd like to say that MS TREE consistently sports among the most excellent covers on the rack. You've hit your stride lately in particular - graphically dramatic choice of colors, everything I much prefer "static" covers like #25 - #27 to the action shots like #12 and #17. (Altho I would've loved a cover shot of the fight in the prison shower.)

Keep up the great work

Larry Kraus, NORTHBROOK IL

I agree, Larry, that Terry has come up with some great covers in the past year or so. Terry himself has memories, by the way, of those duo-tone TINTINs and we both are big fans of Herge's straightforward, literate, elegant work. As for taking stories out of headlines, that is something I intend to keep doing - it seems to me that a modern crime story must reflect modern crimes. I do the same thing in DICK TRACY, but there I am not able to deal with the controversial subject matter that MS TREE lends itself to. In case you haven't seen some of the coverage in the comics press, let me point out that the continuity in progress in this very issue was begun *before* the Tracy Lords story turned up in the media (for those who've been on Mars in recent months. Ms Lords - the hottest property in porn - apparently was underage when most if not all of her films were made - causing mucho trouble for the XXX "industry" and making major media waves). What we have here is a genuine, Milton Caniff style coincidence. All I did was write a follow-up story to "Runaway," focusing on girl runaways this time and it occurred to me that such a girl might wander into the world of pornography - and from there I extrapolated a tale that is spookily similar to what the papers became full of weeks later. You ask why one detail in a MS TREE story can be dismissed as a nitpick where another detail is what an entire MIKE MIST mystery hinges upon, and I can answer that simply: the rules in MIKE MIST are different from those in MS TREE. The minute mystery form centers upon discovering which detail, in this very brief mystery, holds the answer to said mystery in the more complicated, longer form and more "real" detective story which Ms Tree usually stars in. The story hinges upon more important, and usually character related matters. (Note that when Ms Tree and Mist appear together in a story, the rules of the minute mystery format seem to hold sway as in "Music to Murder By" in our SUMMER SPECIAL.) I don't mean to cop out when I say "it's only a story" but, hell, it *is* only a story. We are doing a monthly book here, turning out a lot of material under heavy deadline pressure that means we're going to goof from time to time - it means not every story will be as good as another - it means there will be occasional continuity glitches, and so on. I invoke my "only a story" litany frequently because I object to the anal retentive comic book fans who ignore the big picture and focus on some unimportant, insignificant detail. Comics have been hurt, in recent years, by a wrongheaded obsession with so-called "continuity." These are fictional stories, kids - they never happened. Lighten up.

Dear Max,

After reading MS TREE #28 I wrote and suggested you try a green issue. Well, I don't think my letter was in the mail for a week when I bought MS TREE #29 and found it to be a green issue. I wish I could get that kind of service from my insurance company. I think the green worked very well. It's hard to use green for such things as flesh tones but when you're only using one color realism isn't that important. What is important is to balance the overall effect of the color in order to make the page as a whole easier on the eyes. For the record four colors have been used so far. Red four times (issues 10, 11, 13 and 23). Blue eight times (12, 17, 21, 22, 24, 25, 27 and 28). Sepia seven times (14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20 and 26). Green once (29). My suggestion for a new color is yellow. So far most of the colors you have been using have been dark, which has fit the tone of the stories, but if you have a more upbeat issue yellow might fit in nicely.

I really enjoyed MS TREE #29. Ms Tree's dramatic personality change offers a lot of story possibilities. It's good to see a comic depicting a dramatic character change handled in a

realistic manner. Most mainstream comics force dramatic changes when their circulation starts to drop, rather than for any reason involving the plot. One of the best things about Ms Tree is that it is unpredictable. Something unexpected is always happening. This is done so well that after an unexpected event happens, I feel I should have been expecting it all along.

I also think your portrayal of the effects of drugs used for psychiatric purposes was very realistic. Even when a patient is being treated in the best possible manner, dramatic personality changes can take place. Often these changes can be too much for the patients' friends to handle and they resent the changes. How long will Ms Tree remain nonviolent and whether it is best for her remains to be seen, but I think it is a good thing for the character to go through. Thanks for the most realistic portrayal of the current state of psychiatric treatment in comics today. Treatments have come a long way in the past 30 years and even though they still need much improvement, it's time comics updated their versions of mental hospitals. Once again Ms Tree is a ground breaking comic.

I'm sure by now you're sick of hearing comments on your abortion issues, but Russel Shaddox's comments in issue #29 baffled me. He stated that he thought a woman has the right to abort a fetus because a woman is a "fully developed life" and a fetus is not. In saying this he is just restating what the whole abortion argument is about. When is life developed enough to have the protection of law? Societies have answered this question so differently through the ages that it is mind boggling. Some societies considered wasting semen sinful while others consider infanticide or euthanasia perfectly acceptable. Saying a life is fully developed is not enough, you have to be able to have a good definition of what "fully developed" means in order to have a good argument for or against abortion.

I can't wait to see your Batman issues (402 and 403 I believe). If you can bring some of Ms Tree's hatred of and obsession with crime to The Batman, you'll be going a long way toward getting the character back on the right track. The two characters are more similar than they appear to be.

Michael Marz, DULUTH, MN

Dear Max and Terry

I've read and enjoyed your work for some time now. I've read through your MIKE MIST work, especially the collection published by Eclipse several years ago. I've read numerous DICK TRACY stories and all your MS TREE's but none ever inspired me to write to you before until I read MS TREE #28.

Roger's Story was the best story that has appeared in this magazine to date. Quite often in comics today, the main character steps back to allow the supporting cast to share in the limelight, yet none of these stories are anywhere near to the quality of this one. These stories usually present your basic "day in the life of." They never let you see what makes these characters tick, what it is that moves and motivates them. That's the reason that I'm writing now.

Up till this time the only views that we had been given of Roger Freeman was that he had a degree of animosity towards Ms Tree and only stayed with her because of friendship with her late husband. Even his partnership in the agency wouldn't have been enough if his friendship hadn't been that strong.

Today we saw that loyalty stretched and tested to its ultimate limits. Man will do anything in the name of love, even betrayal.

Roger, caught in a weak moment, remembering and reliving one of his mental scars of losing Vic Green, is caught off guard by his lost love. We then see into his life again, seeing that love found and then lost. He, as a lonely person, quickly falls back to her, hoping to recapture what he had before, trying to ignore the "you can't go home again" syndrome. Unfortunately, we see that she is using him for something right from the start as she uses the shades for a signal.

He is then faced with the ultimate choice, possibly regaining that lost love through betrayal of Ms Tree or refusing Vick and facing the loneliness again. Fortunately, he goes with his head instead of his heart. Tragically, his hardboiledness takes control and in response to his feeling of being used, he kills her. Though it was in apparent self-defense, he could have shot to disarm her. This time, he overcame himself. Hopefully now he will be able to open up himself and perhaps cure himself of the loneliness that he entrenched himself into.

I enjoy MS TREE immensely and while I do regret the price

increase, I will continue to support it even if I have to drop other titles that are marginal and no longer exciting. Once again, thank you for MS TREE.

Harlan Krissoff, PERTH AMBOY, NJ

We regret the price increase as well. We thank our readers for their loyalty, thus far anyway, our circulation has not dropped since the increase - and hope you understand that this increase was put into effect only to insure that Terry and I could keep doing MS TREE.

Dear Max & Terry

Right after reading #29 I sat down and wrote you a rough draft of this letter, but then decided to wait until I had all of "The Other Cheek" in my possession. Now, with MS TREE #29 - 31 before me, I can tear loose with some disordered observations.

The shock-cut contrast between the relative calm of #29's cover (a relaxed Ms Tree menaced from behind by a sea of armed thugs) and the splash page, which showed our heroine blasting away at someone from the darkness, her contorted face lit by the flash of her pistol, was masterfully done. I've been buying MS TREE for the writing alone for quite a long time now, something I've done with no other comic. I found Terry's artwork pretty flat compared to the mock-noir stylishness of his earlier work. Yet the way he drew Ms Tree herself was always interesting, and the cover/splash page contrast of #29 worked beautifully as a visual metaphor of the subterranean theme of "The Other Cheek": the idea that our heroine, deceptively calm and tranquilized on the surface, is in reality a cauldron of murderous rage, a human vortex drawing crime and violence irresistibly toward herself even when she consciously tries to avoid bloodshed.

Thus, my original objections to the mask-like quality of Ms Tree's face (which you were kind enough to print) had to be junked. I now feel that Terry's artwork mirrors the changing psychology of her soul, showing Ms Tree toughened, roughened, and driven to the borders of madness by the accelerated violence of the world she has created. The criminals drawn into her orbit by the ferocity of her original campaigns against them have now become a permanent part of Ms Tree's existence. She no longer needs to seek out trouble, as it comes gunning for her wherever she is - in the office, on the street, in jail or the looney bin. Fighting fire with fire has caused a general inferno.

You'd think it was her Destiny or something.

Those readers who fill the lettercol with laborious "justifications" of Ms Tree's killings are way off base. I think she is definitely no moral exemplar, but rather a fantasy detective inhabiting a demonized universe ("It's JUST A STORY"). Furthermore, she is *out of control*, the last bloody massacres piling up in the Tree-Muerta feud had reached a truly Wagnerian scale before Ms Tree was locked up in the asylum. And wouldn't you know it? By the time she was released - calm, rational, "all better now" - the bloodlust had infected every one of her associates: Dan, Roger, Mike Jr. and even the gentle Effie, who puts a very big bullet hole in one baddie's head ("See what you made me do?" she cries). The KILLING, it is apparent, will continue in spite of any temporary backsliding on Ms Tree's part. The brutalized teeth-clenching masks of Dan and Roger in #30 seen as they struggle to force our heroine to come to her senses, make this point very clear. And the superb cover of #31, Ms Tree's explosive (and exultant) release from drug-induced passivity denotes a corresponding release from sanity as well. Her face in that drawing reminds me somewhat of the depraved faces I've seen in reprints of the old *Crime Suspense Stories*, especially the ones drawn by Jack Kamen. I think you guys know what you're doing.

Of course Ms Tree has many qualities we admire: tenacity, poise, forthrightness, loyalty (to her husband's memory, to her "family" of associates), and a welcome lack of self-pity or self-aggrandizement. She also has a strong working conception of right and wrong. But do these qualities make her that sickliest of TV-generated concepts, a *ROLE MODEL*? I hope not. Ms Tree is currently travelling a very dark path, in which she tries to reconcile a business-as-usual attitude toward life with an impending future of limitless violence, her self-division is so intense (landing her in and out of various psychiatrists' offices) that it seems to have mirrored itself at last in the *Enemy*. Dominique Muerta is revealed as a criminal *alter ego* of Michael Tree in #31, complete with vendetta, a personal code of ethics, and a kid to protect. Things are getting

positively strange in this comic

I believe at any rate that our heroine has too much potential for craziness for you to allow her to assume the one note role of moral exemplar. We are exploring a character as she grows, develops and possibly deteriorates. You wrote in #19, and it was always that dicey open-endedness that kept me coming back for more. If I ever sense that MS TREE is advocating some kind of hardass self-righteous dogma as THE ANSWER, I'll quit reading it.

Speaking of role models, I noticed that one reader (the embittered MA) drew a nice comparison of Ms Tree and Frank Miller's Batman. The similarities **do** exist though our heroine has a long way to go before she could hope to assume the epic mantle of Miller's ravaged colossus. Have you noticed how the theme of role models runs throughout the entire DARK KNIGHT saga? Once Batman has deprived the Mutants of their leader, they break up into splinter groups patterned on various TV-news "celebrities." Batman, the Joker even (hilariously) Richard Nixon. The point seems to be that impressionable kids need strong positive role models to put them on the right path. If the models are demeaning, then the kids who use them will turn out debased. There is some truth in that observation, but in order to regard the towering, mythic, borderline psychotic Batman of the DARK KNIGHT books as a positive role model one would have to believe that the Mi-leresque hell of his Gotham City was synonymous with reality. Which it isn't. Not yet.

I don't read MS TREE in order to find role models. I read it to follow the relentless progress of a decent soul as it forges through a world of crime and horror. I mark the changes wrought in our heroine as she is time and again, drawn through the needle's eye. I want to be surprised, and I very frequently am. Ms Tree occupies an impossible place somewhere between Mike Hammer and the heroines of Cornell Woolrich, it's a beautiful balancing act, and I pray you can keep it up.

Patrick Perry E. FALMOUTH, MA

Dear Max,

First in this my first letter to MS TREE, I would like to say that this is one of my three favourite comics (the other two are DAREDEVIL under Frank Miller, and SWAMP THING) LEGION OF FANTASY, TITANS, LOVE AND ROCKETS, and X-MEN (yes!) are great fun, too.

I am one of MS TREE's younger readers, since I'm sixteen (in a month). On TV, I like HILL STREET BLUES, EQUALIZER, MIAMI VICE, and NEWHART. I don't read many books. Any suggestions on where to start?

Can you try to move back to Eclipse, maybe on their \$1.25 Canadian line? I think it might sell well there (and that isn't just a kiddy line, since Alan Moore writes one of the comics). MS TREE deserves to be in colour at least.

My first recent MS TREE was #20. About the gay issue, I don't think that Ms Tree should have a gay character as a representative of all the gays on the go. The world isn't crawling with gays like DYNASTY, and most of today's movies seem to say, I'd say that there are as many good gays on the go as young blind people. Just keep MS TREE real.

About the violence, it's just a comic, not real life, so I don't mind it.

One thing that really sickens me is all the sleeping around in comics, TV, and movies that takes place. No one EVER gets any diseases (I'm talking about males and females - I know AIDS is sometimes shown). This isn't real at all. The real bad thing about it is it makes a lot of today's young believe it. How about a MS TREE story where someone picks up something.

Terry's art and covers are getting better. The covers are really getting better and better. The blue tones are my favourite in the comics.

MIST is fun as a little mystery, but I don't think he should get his own comic.

I liked the abortion issues. I'm glad Michael is now like me against abortion. No one has the right to murder those babies. Society is more worried about saving cute baby seals than human babies, which is sick. Your stories were fair to both sides. Your stories also showed that the law might not punish this crime, but since humans really know it's wrong, they punish themselves.

I would like to say that people against abortion aren't the only ones who use violence. This week, on the church (the Basilica) where I go to Mass every week, where Pope John Paul II gave Mass, which is a national historic site in Canada

and has been on stamps, proof was given of this. On Good Friday every year, there is an anti-abortion walk. Easter Sunday morning, the pro-abortion side (some people from it, of course) spray-painted Nazi signs and the words "Pro-choice" all over the Basilica. This shows they are violent, too.

Steve Cadigan LOGY BAY, NEWFOUNDLAND

Steve, Ms Tree's opinion about abortion (as stated in "Right to Die") is that she considers it immoral, but doesn't believe it should be illegal, this point of view, of course, was unpopular with a lot of people, which is fine with me. Controversy sparks good letters pages, after all. As for what books you should read, why of course you should read my books - ordering them from Bob Weinberg or purchasing them at your local bookstore. After you've purchased and read every single one of my books you can lay your hands on, try some of the following mystery authors: Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Mickey Spillane, Ed McBain, Donald E. Westlake and Erle Stanley Gardner. I'm a big fan of Gardner, by the way, who is much underrated despite being one of the most popular mystery writers of all time. He wrote a lot of Perry Mason novels, many of which are back in print, the best ones, in my opinion, were written from about 1945 through 1960. So check the copyright before you try one. (The only Perry Mason I lack is the posthumous THE CASE OF THE FENCED-IN WOMAN, by the way, if some loyal reader would like to help me out - any edition will do, I still need DRAGNET '66 by B. Trailins, too for that matter.) The best Spillanes are those written between 1947 and 1953, plus THE DEEP (1961), and THE GIRL HUNTERS (1962). Those other writers listed are worth sampling from any period of their careers. I am also very high on James M. Cain and Jim Thompson, but both of those writers are very uneven and you could easily choose a clinker. If anyone's really interested, I'd be glad to recommend specific books by both in a future SWAK.

Dear Terry,

I don't know how many of these type of letters you get, but these people complaining of the violence in MS TREE have got to go. Comic books are entertainment, pure and simple. Sure, some books are more 'true to life' entertainment than others, but geez, this is just ink on newsprint. I feel you and Max offer one of the finest books on the market and I recommend it to everyone who will listen. (I even buy two copies because I'm sure that sooner or later, people will find out what they're missing and I'll have a mint set for sale!)

I can tell by your responses that both of you go with your instincts, and by all means, continue to do so. That's what makes your work come alive.

Ken Holewczynski, address unavailable

Thanks Ken - and, just for the record, many of the MS TREE back issues are already sold out. We do plan to continue our collections, however, with THE FILES OF MS TREE, VOLUME THREE, THE MIKE MIST CASEBOOK coming out before Christmas.

Dear Max and Terry,

I have been collecting MS TREE for about eight or nine months now (I recently completed my collection with No. 10). I thought I'd write to tell you how much I'm enjoying MS TREE at the moment.

The two issues 'Heroine Withdrawal' and the latest issue (#29) have certainly shown an interesting development in the characters. I'll be most interested to see how you carry on from here. Will Ms Tree 'suffer a relapse' and return to her old style, will she develop a more restrained approach or will she remain the only pacifist P.I. around?

(I didn't really like the 'Baby Boom' story and wasn't very impressed by 'Prisoner in Cell Block Hell,' but like the current stuff a lot more.)

Terry's art, too, seems to have improved after issue #23 which looked rushed in places. I do like the use of light and dark on the splash pages of the last two issues, and the covers to issues #26 and #29 are both in their ways excellent (especially in their use of color to enhance their effect. Does Terry do the coloring as well?)

I also like the way that the duotone color of the month seems to be chosen to enhance the story.

It seems that MS TREE is a comic where the creators do care about their product, which certainly helps us readers to

care, too

I sometime am going to have to dig out my issues of **Eclipse Magazine** to find out why I wasn't grabbed by the strip back then

Oh, by the way, why do you stick to the two chapters per issue format. Why not vary it a little sometime?

I would prefer you to stick with the larger stories (3 or 4 issues at least) as I find the shorter tales generally seem too cramped

Anyway thanks for the entertaining reading

Andrew Butchers, BARRING, ESSEX, ENGLAND

Thank you for your comments. Andrew Terry does do color guides for the covers and he does select the color for a given issue's two-color process with an eye on what is appropriate for the mood of the story itself. For purposes of later collecting these stories in books, Terry and I find the two ten-page chapters per issue format to be useful, we might, on the occasion of a complete in-one-issue story, do away with the chapter format. Our story "Music to Murder By," already did so. And speaking of varying things, we do like to vary our stories as to subject matter and mood and length - hence, sometimes you may like one story better than another. You might be more comfortable, as a reader, with MS TREE if we followed one specific format or formula, but sooner or later, you'd get bored and drift away. That's why, after a long continuity, we sometimes like to give readers a "breather" with a shorter one. We just hope you enjoy what we're doing enough to roll along with the ebb and flow of the book - some months you may like what you see better than other months, but the overall effect of this book should continue to be one of the most rewarding experiences in current comics. That's the desired effect, anyway

Dear Max, Terry, Deni and Gary,

Hello again folks, it sure has been a while since I last wrote but I started a new job and it has been very time consuming. But never fear, I've still kept up with MS TREE. Issue #30 was what I felt was going to be the end of this not so thrilling plot-line, but as usual Max you do throw your curveballs when needed.

Max, I also caught your interview with Mickey Spillane in COMIC FEATURE - you both sounded as if you enjoyed each others company. I also happened to see the Mick on "Live at Five" on the TV. He said there just might be another Mike Hammer book, one can only hope! In regard to reader Tom Crunkleton's letter, I have to disagree, I think Lindsay Bloom makes the best Velda, she is exactly the way Mike describes her (her looks) and I without a doubt do not agree on Armand Assante, that man can't even act! Oh well, we all have our personal favorites, but I know we'll agree on one thing MS TREE is tops in her grade!

Issues #31 "The Other Cheek" said it all. Our beloved Ms Tree is back and thank God! I thought we lost Bryan Hand there for a couple of pages, it's good to see him make it, his character is more likeable than Mike Jr. and it's about time someone popped Captain Meyers. This guy had it coming for a long time - good show, Valer.

But now to the story - all things must come to an end and it was well worth the wait, it seems we have a sort of Daredevil - Kingpin relationship here with Ms Tree and Dominique Muerta. It's great! While everyone is still picking movie actresses for Ms Tree, how about Joan Collins for Dominique? She would be perfect. Oh yes, to all the people who want bondage check out page one of chapter six. Is poor Mike Jr. enough for ya! Ms Tree is back and so am I. See you all next month.

Brian Daly JACKSON, NJ

Mickey Spillane keeps threatening to write a new Mike Hammer novel and the last time I spoke to him (a month ago as I write this) he claimed to be at work on it. No one on earth is looking forward to a new Mike Hammer more than yours truly - but I've been waiting so long, and Mick has been promising so long, that it's in the "I'll believe it when I see it" category. Brian, I like Armand Assante as Mike Hammer and that's all there is to it there's just no reasoning with me. I love that grungy, mean little movie (I, THE JURY). Despite her glorious past as SIXPACK ANNIE (when she was a beautiful blue-eyed, buxom blonde), Lindsay Bloom (thus far, at least) has been much too sweet and nice in the HAMMER TV series to make a believable Velda, whose descriptions in the novels make her sound like a

cross between Betty Page and Jane Russell, and who is supposed to be a tough licensed private eye herself. You know - like a certain character in a certain comic book

Dear Max,

I've said it before and I'll say it again **QUEERS AIN'T NATURAL!!!** But what's even more unnatural are the killer queers, the ones who prey on young boys like Billy Bob - that murdering faggot - who appeared way back in issue #17. I loved it when MS TREE blew him away. That 'sucker' got exactly what he deserved.

What rites my blood even more are so-called "lawyers" like Robert M. Ingersoll who are appalled by the actions of a MS TREE against the Billy Bob's of the world. Perhaps if Robert were abducted by a killer queer, strapped to a bed and then well, ol' Robert just might change his point of view. There's only one way to deal with murderers, rapists and child molesters - **TRASH 'EM!!!**

The stories, the artwork, the letters, it's the care that is put into each one of these areas that, for me, makes MS TREE the most enjoyable thought-provoking monthly comic book published here in America.

"Wheels," JAKE'S TAP CHICAGO

Yow. We appreciate your comments, "Wheels," particularly your last paragraph - but we have a hunch future SWAKs will find a reader or two of ours disagreeing with you.

Dear Max and Terry,

Thanks for another great story in #31 (and thanks for printing my letter, too). I'm really enjoying the direction you're taking MS TREE. Even though she had to use violence to save Mike she still showed the stay in the mental hospital did have some positive effect.

I know this will probably start a controversy but I really disagree with B. R. Wilder's letter which follows mine in issue #31. Criminals can be rehabilitated and it often happens. Just because a person has made a mistake in life does not mean they're completely hopeless forever. Killing a person who committed a murder will not bring the victim back - it only commits another murder something I just can't agree with.

Vic Mordoh, OCALA, FL

Gee, Vic, maybe you and me and Wheels can get together at Jake's Tap in Chicago and hash this one over. Actually, I agree with you. I have always been against capital punishment because it is (a) illogical to punish a crime by committing that same crime, and (b) it is a murder by the state, performed by the state in the name of its citizens, which includes me, and I don't care to have my name go down as a murderer in that Great Big Record Book in the Sky. On the other hand, if a felon shoots at a cop, I'd like to see that cop shoot that felon right out of his blanketed-blank socks, and if someone harmed my family or friends, well, check in with "Wheels" and he'll tell you how I might react. But what happens to me, in my personal and private life, is one thing; what the state does, in my name, is another - and the state taking a life, even that of some lowlife scum bastard murderer (I've been hanging around with Wheels too long!), makes me uneasy, to say the least.

Dear Max,

Without question, MS TREE is my favorite current comic book. You and Terry do a great job on it. I was delighted to read in MS TREE #29 that you're as great a fan of the black and white DRAGNET as I am. A pay TV station, the Z Channel, showed the original DRAGNET pilot ("The Big Jump") in April and it was fantastic! Although the USA Cable Network recently showed the color DRAGNET TV series, it's the black and white version that I am so anxious to see again. Nick at Nite (the nighttime version of Nickelodeon) has been rerunning many black and white TV series, such as ROUTE 66, MY 3 SONS, MISTER ED, etc. I wish you would urge your readers to write Nick at Nite (1775 Broadway, 9th Floor, New York, NY 10019) urging them to rerun the black and white DRAGNET series. I have already written them.

Gregory Jackson, LOS ANGELES, CA



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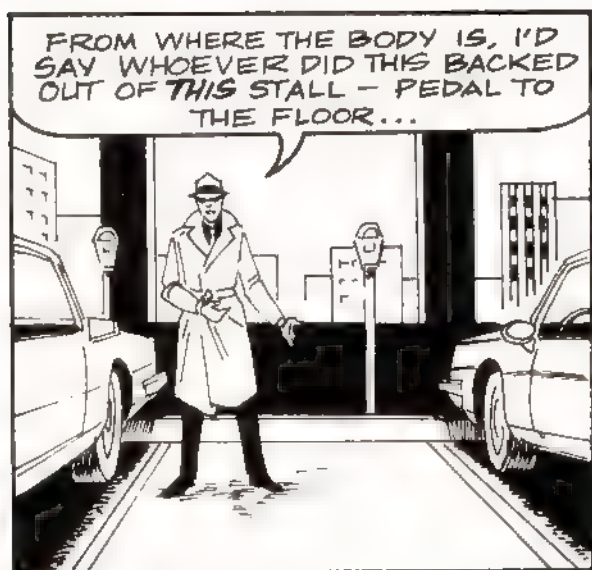
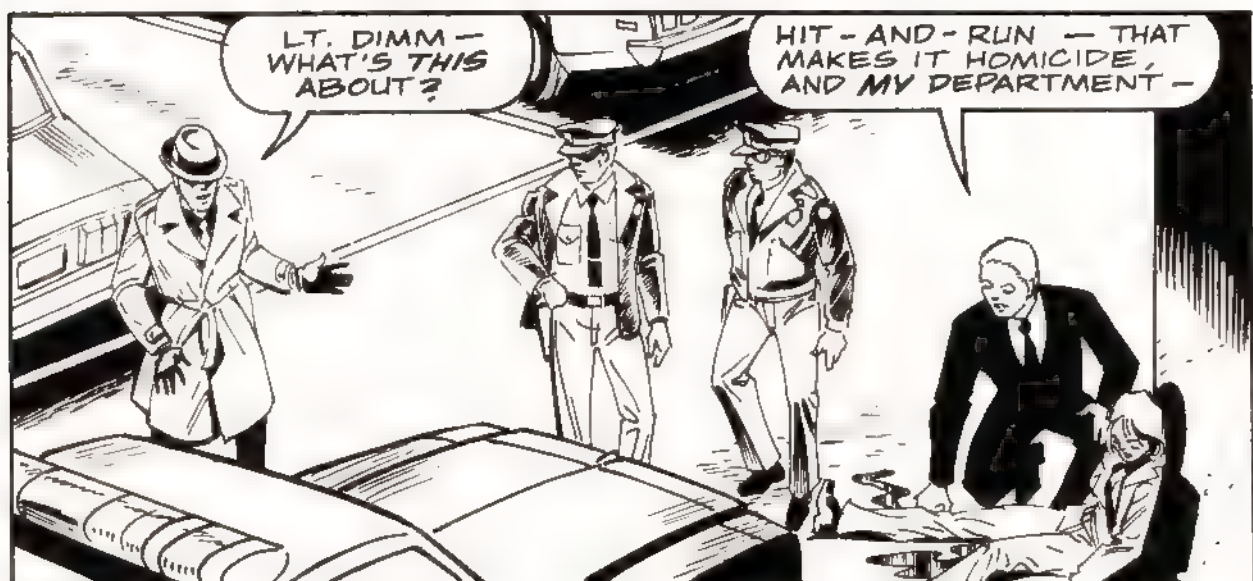
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THE MIKE MIST

MINUTE MYSTERIES

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TICKET to WRITE

A black and white line drawing of a man's face, wearing a fedora and a cigarette in his mouth. He has a serious expression.

IT WAS MIDAFTERNOON WHEN I HEADED FOR MY CAR IN THE SELF-PARK PUBLIC RAMP NEXT TO MY OFFICE BUILDING —



THIS TIME OF DAY, THE RAMP WAS USUALLY DEAD — AND IT WASN'T ALONE...



"METER MAID, HUH?" "YES," HE SAID. "WHOEVER IT WAS BACKED RIGHT INTO HER —"



HAVE YOU TOUCHED ANYTHING?

NOT A THING — WHY?

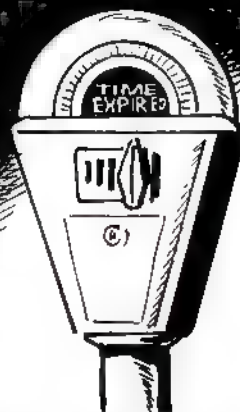


THIS WAS NO ACCIDENT, LT.

MURDER, MIKE? BUT WHY KILL A METER MAID?



"THE ANSWER'S OBVIOUS, LT. — AND I THINK YOU'LL FIND SOME OTHER MAJOR CRIME WENT DOWN THIS AFTERNOON NEARBY —"



THE METER MAID'S TICKET BOOK WAS MISSING — AND IT OBVIOUSLY INCLUDED A COPY OF A TICKET GIVEN TO SOMEONE WHO DID NOT WANT HIS OR HER PRESENCE HERE RECORDED.

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Ms. TREE

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"RUNAWAY II"

Chapter Four

THE FOLLOWING MORNING,
AFTER A LEISURELY BREAKFAST
WHICH HE PREPARED,
GLENN TAGGED ALONG WITH
ME TO THE OFFICE -

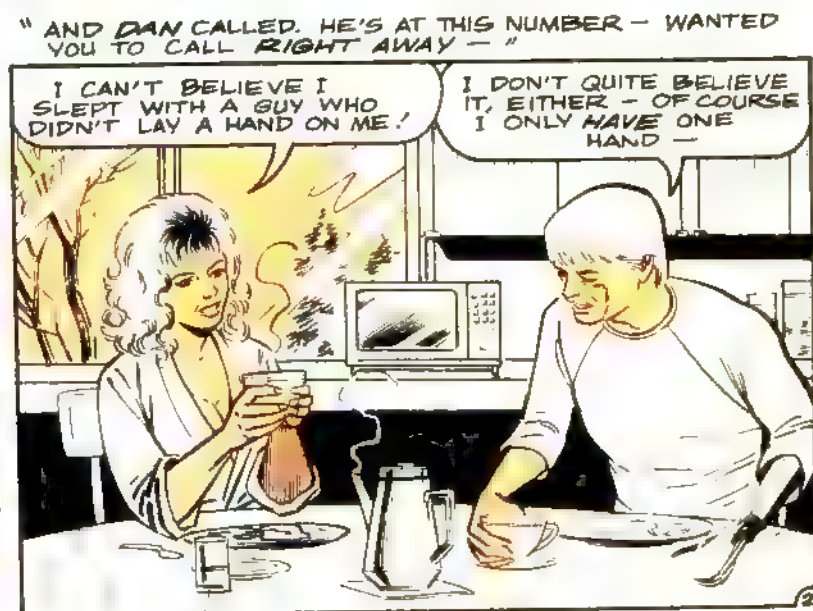
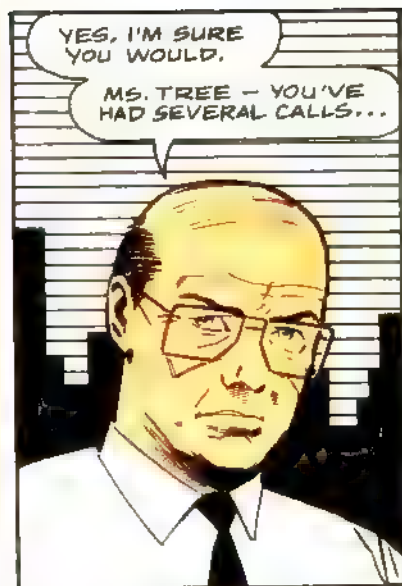
SKIN GAME

GLENN, THIS IS
ROGER FREEMONT.
ROGER,
GLENN HARWOOD -

HEARD A LOT
ABOUT YOU.

AND I YOU.
WHAT BRINGS YOU
TO THIS HELLHOLE
WE CALL A
CITY?

A RUNAWAY. YOU KNOW...
JUST ANOTHER LITTLE GIRL
WHO WAS MADE
TO GROW UP
TOO FAST -

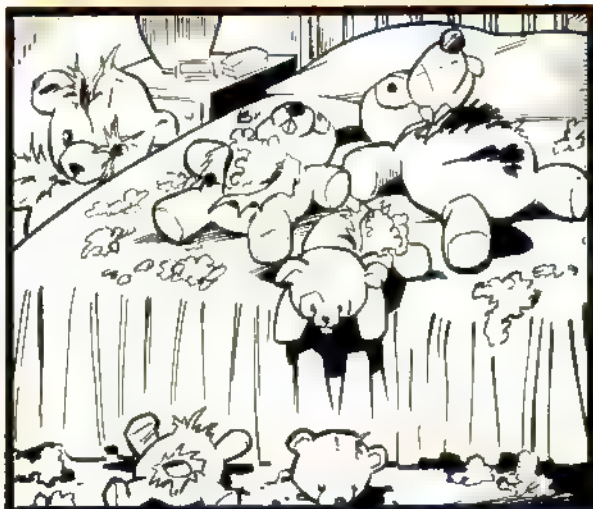




WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO TODAY?

IT'S NOT UP TO ME. I'M JUST YOUR LITTLE SHADOW.

"I THOUGHT MAYBE I SHOULD STAY IN — I MEAN, I'M KINDA SHOOK UP, AFTER WHAT HAPPENED TO MY ANIMALS."



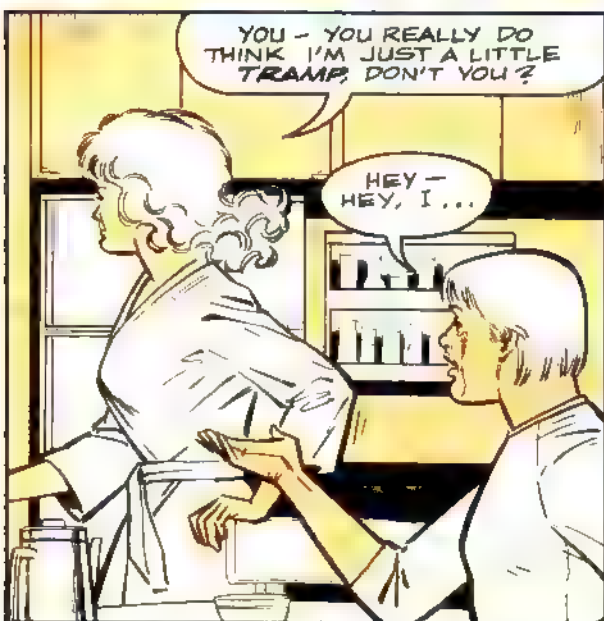
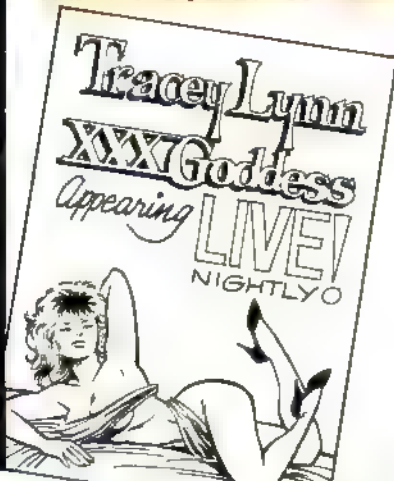
THAT WAS SCARE TACTICS, FAR AS I CAN TELL. I DON'T THINK ANYBODY'S GOING TO HURT YOU.



YOU MEAN BECAUSE YOU'RE AROUND TO PROTECT ME?



"THERE'S THAT. BUT REMEMBER, TRACEY — YOU'RE A COMMODITY TO THESE PEOPLE. THEY WANT YOU BREATHING AND IN ONE BEAUTIFUL PIECE."



YOU — YOU REALLY DO THINK I'M JUST A LITTLE TRAMP, DON'T YOU?

HEY — HEY, I...



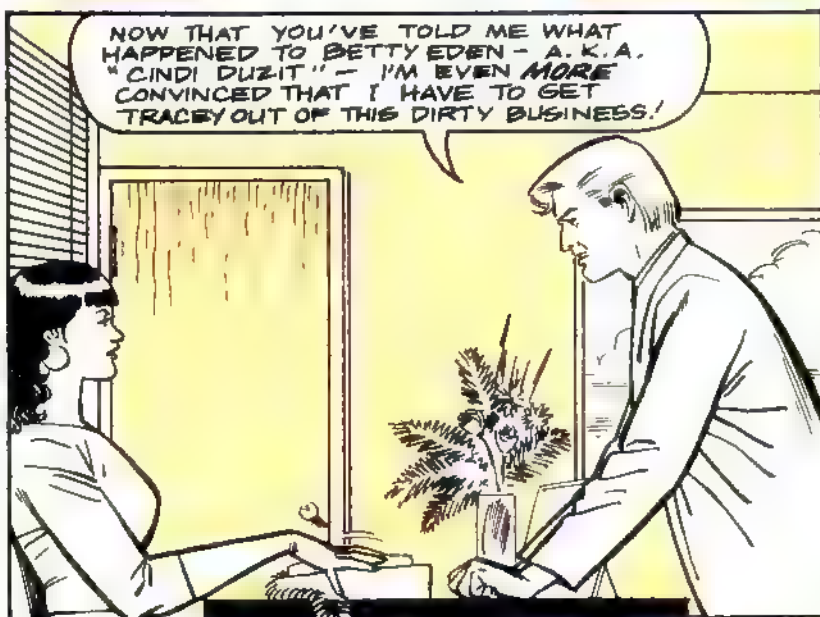
I'M A HOOKER TO YOU — BUT I THINK OF IT AS SHOW BUSINESS. I'M JUST MAKING THE MOST OF WHAT I GOT!

OKAY — OKAY —



"GUYS COME UP TO ME ALL THE TIME AT PERSONAL APPEARANCES, AND SAY HOW MUCH THEY LIKE MY MOVIES— HOW I'M THEIR DREAM GIRL AND STUFF."







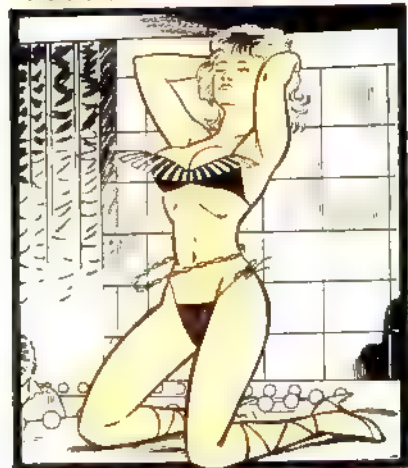

WE ALL ARE VICTIMS OF EVENTS BEYOND OUR CONTROL - BUT EVEN THE BETTY EDENS AND TRACEY LYNNs, ONCE THEY REACH ADULTHOOD, HAVE TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS. AND THEY HAVE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THOSE DECISIONS, JUST AS WE HAVE TO LET THEM MAKE THOSE DECISIONS - RIGHT OR WRONG -



ADULTHOOD! THESE ARE CHILDREN WE'RE TALKING ABOUT!

ARE WE?

"YOU'VE BEEN HEDGING GLENN - IF TRACEY WERE STILL UNDERAGE, YOU'D HAVE BLOWN THE WHISTLE ON HER AND HER ACTIVITIES -"

I... I NEVER SAID SHE WAS STILL UNDERAGE. JUST THAT SHE WAS WHEN SHE GOT INTO TRIPLE-X.



AND SHE'S STILL A TEENAGER!

UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, SHE'S TURNED 18. NOT LEGALLY A CHILD -



NOT... LEGALLY, NO.

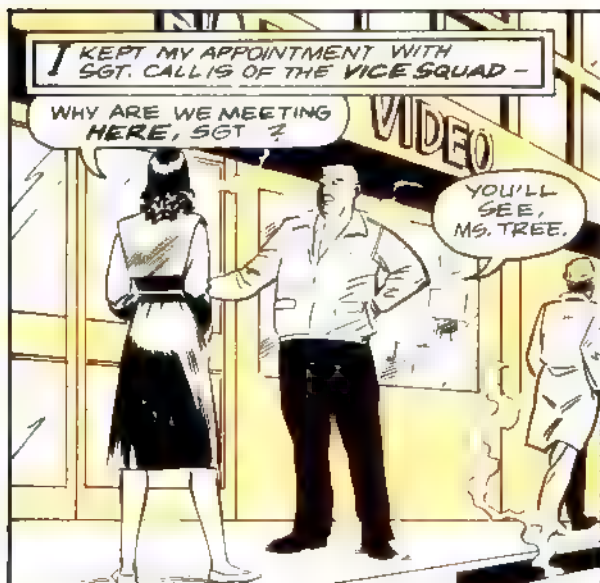
BUT SHE WAS WHEN SHE WAS COMING 'ROUND TO YOUR OFFICE ...



HOW... HOW CAN YOU IMPLY THAT? DO YOU THINK I... WITH A 15 YEAR OLD?

YOU'RE HUMAN, GLENN. AND TRACEY'S A BORN SEDUCTRESS. I DON'T BLAME YOU.

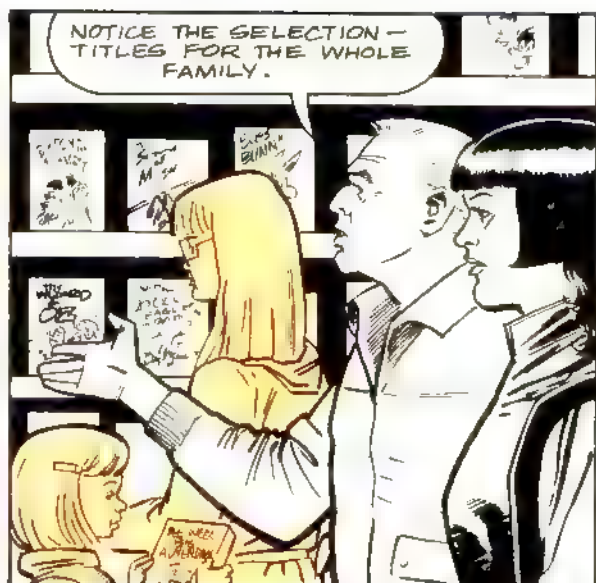




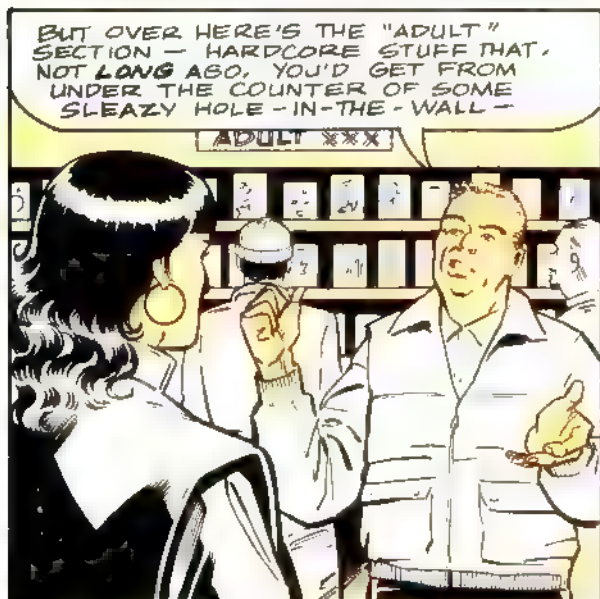
I KEPT MY APPOINTMENT WITH SGT. CALLIS OF THE VICE SQUAD -

WHY ARE WE MEETING HERE, SGT.?

YOU'LL SEE, MS. TREE.



NOTICE THE SELECTION - TITLES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY.



BUT OVER HERE'S THE "ADULT" SECTION - HARDWARE STUFF THAT, NOT LONG AGO, YOU'D GET FROM UNDER THE COUNTER OF SOME SLEAZY HOLE-IN-THE-WALL -

ADULT XXX



NOT A WELL-LIT RESPECTABLE ESTABLISHMENT LIKE THIS.

WHAT'S YOUR POINT, CALLIS?



I BEEN WORKIN' VICE FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, MS. TREE. AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT PORNOGRAPHY IS NO MORE.

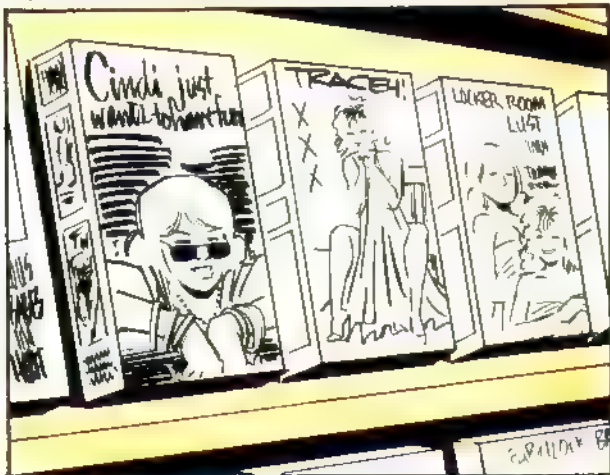


IF I CAN'T BUST CRAP LIKE THIS, WHAT CAN I BUST?

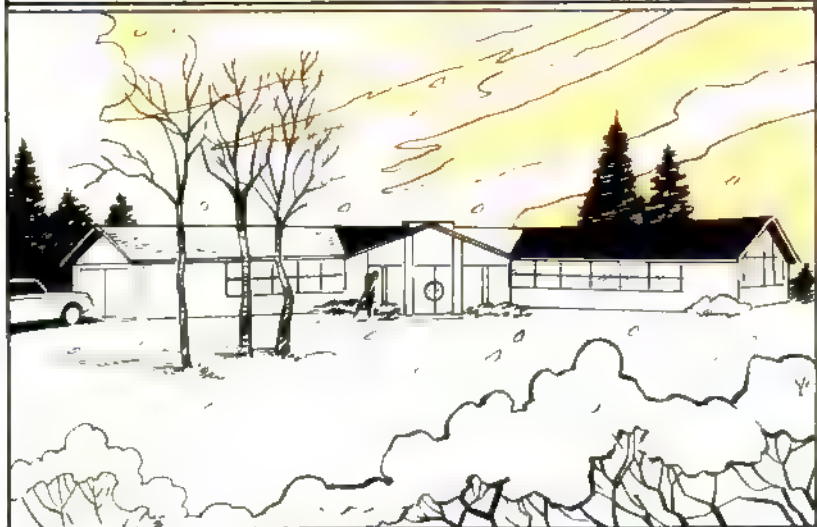
WHAT DO YOU BUST?



"THAT'S 'CAUSE WE COME DOWN **HARD** ON 'EM IF WE FIND 'EM SHOOTIN' THAT **GARBAGE**. WE DON'T SCREW AROUND WITH NO PORNOGRAPHY CHARGE - WE HIT 'EM FER **PROSTITUTION** AND **PANDERING** - "

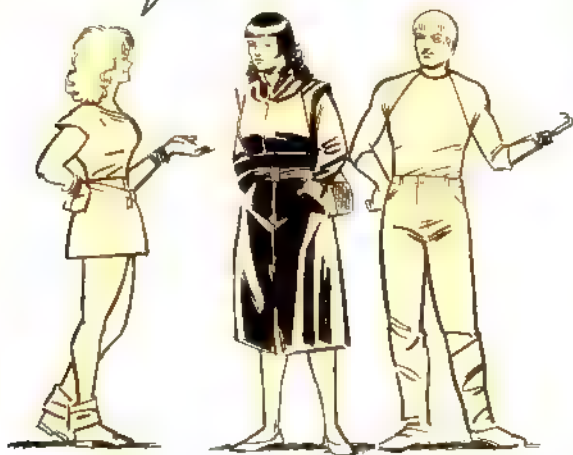


MY NEXT STOP WAS THE SECLUDED SUBURBAN HOME OF EDDIE GRAHAM - THE COKE DEALER WHO'D BEEN THE BOYFRIEND OF "CINDI DUIT."



MS. TREE - IF YOU'RE
LOOKIN' FOR EDDIE,
HE'S NOT HERE
RIGHT NOW--

EDDIE'S HER
BOY FRIEND,
SHE SAYS.



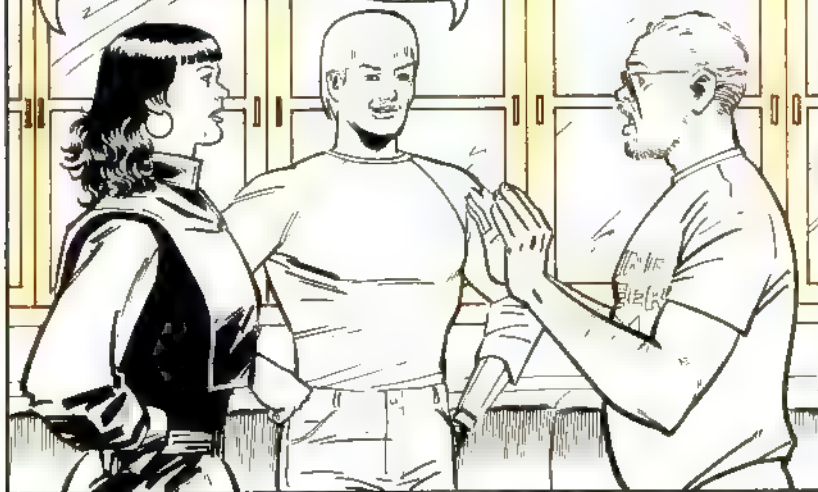
COME ON IN - YOU KNOW HARRY RYND,
DON'T YOU? HE STOPPED BY FOR
A BUSINESS TALK.



I KNOW
MR. RYND -
WHOSE NAME IS
SELF-EXPLANATORY--

YEAH -
HE DOES
LACK
APPEAL.

NO NEED TO
BE INSULTING -



SINCE YOU'RE WORKIN'
FOR ME, MS. TREE, I GUESS
IT WON'T HURT TO TELL YA
... HARRY'S MY FINANCIAL
ANGEL. HE'S BACKIN' MY
NEW PRODUCTION COMPANY--



YOU LIED TO ME, HARRY
- YOU SAID YOU WEREN'T
IN THE TRIPLE-X MOVIE
BUSINESS--

HEY--
TAKE
IT
EASY--



GEE -
SHE HIT
HIM -
HOW COME?

HARRY WANTS TO BE
THE KING OF PORN -
AND MS. TREE'S JUST
THE ONE TO CROWN HIM -



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Now that you're properly guarded against any subtle tricks we might try we can continue on with a clear conscience.

BUY! BUY! BUY! Oh, please buy them, my mother's sick and she needs an operation, and my wife says she'll leave me if I turn out to be a failure, the bank's about to foreclose on my house, and I'm fired if this ad doesn't work! Oh, God... please!

Well, now that we've won you over to our side let's introduce you to these various comics you've agreed to purchase:

Mister X: The story of Radiant City (though corrupt and psychotic, what our future might have been) and the enigmatic characters who haunt it.

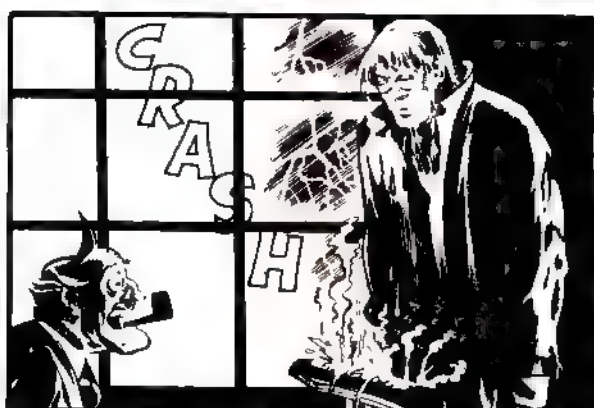
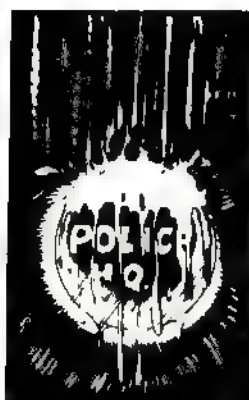
Stig's Inferno: Imagine dying and becoming ruler of Hell all before dinner. Who said Hell and damnation couldn't be fun?

Those Annoying Post Brothers: Continuing their adventures in Bugtown, Ron and Russ Post make a terrible mess wherever they go. It's Charles Manson's favorite comic. Need we say more?

Kelvin Mace: Our newest title. The tough guy's tough guy. He's one private detective who has no business being anyone's role model.

Vortex: Our flagship title continues to showcase both new and established talent in far out fantasy tales.





If you like detective comics—and evidently you do!—you'll want to start reading **Will Eisner's *The Spirit***, a comic book masterpiece. The classic post-war episodes are now being reprinted **monthly**, in black and white. There are four stories in each issue, a new cover by Eisner, and a column in which Eisner discusses story, backgrounds with Dave Schreiner. All for **\$1.95**. At your favorite comics dealer or available by subscription from **Kitchen Sink Press**.

Visa/Mastercard orders may be phoned to (414) 295-6922.



KITCHEN SINK PRESS

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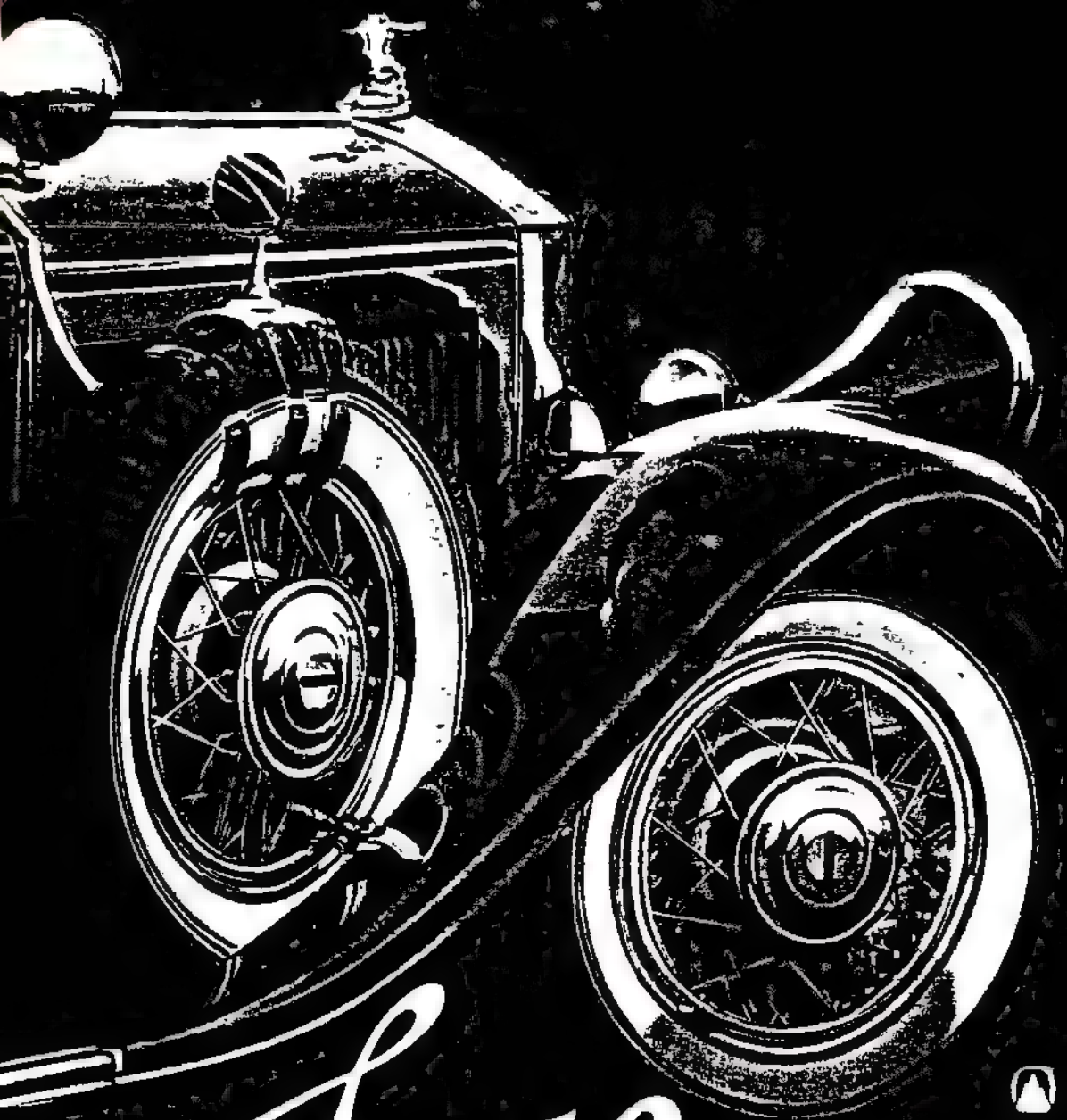
Enclosed is \$ _____ for the following item(s):

- 1 year subscription (12 issues) to **The Spirit**. \$24
- 1 year subscription (4 issues) to **Will Eisner's Quarterly** \$8
- 1 year subscription (6 issues) to **Steve Canyon**. \$30
- FREE information on back issues for above & graphic novels
- FREE catalog of "underground" comics (you **must** be 18)

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Renegade releases

NOVEMBER



WORDSMITH #7

A Christmas story.

Clay and his friends stage a Christmas play featuring the WordSmith's heroes come to life!

MAX COLLINS and
TERRY BEATTY'S

Ms. TREE

"A Christmas
Tree"



Ms. Tree #34

"A Christmas Tree" Max Collins and Terry Beatty's idea of a special Christmas issue!!

The controversial, prophetic graphic novel, "Runaway II" races to a violent, and shocking conclusion!!

Revolver Annual

A special end of the series issue with art and stories from many of the series contributors!!! Includes, "Honcho the Wonder Dog" by Kaneher and Hansen, "Troll Patrol" by DuBay, Hampton and Nebres, "Nice Mice" by Chad; "Kill Joy" by Steve Ditko, "Flora" by Boltinoff; a profile of Boltinoff by Tyree; "Goddess" by Alex Toth; "Thought and Egg," by Doug Moench and Ernie Colon; "Fleming" by Ernie Colon, "Cookie" by DuBay; and a cover by Boyette.



Flaming Carrot #15

FINAL RENEGADE ISSUE!!! This issue marks Bob Burden's departure from Renegade. This book will be going on to self-publication after this, probably on a quarterly schedule, although nothing is firm yet. Due to the collectability of this book, it is recommended that you stock up well on this title. No news as to contents at the time of this newsheet going to press.



Silent Invasion #5 "Identity Crisis!"

Phil Housely and Ivan Kalashnikov close in on Matt, who discovers a shocking secret about his past. Meanwhile, Peggy takes on a whole, new, aggressive personality. This issue will also see the beginning of a new feature as Silent Invasion expands to 34 pages. A regular backup feature, titled "Suburban Nightmares", will contain short experimental stories set in the fifties, to be in keeping with the lead feature. The writer will be the same as the rest of the book, Larry Hancock, and Silent Invasion's artist Michael Cherkas will be assisted in "Suburban Nightmares" by John van Bruggen.

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Renegade
PUBLICATION

THE SILENT INVASION



Black Zeppelin #6

FINAL ISSUE IN THE SERIES! FINAL ISSUE IN THE SERIES!

The final issue of the series will feature two very important stories for those collectors of Gene Day work. One, "Gravediggers Banquet" is a very early story done in collaboration with Dave Sim. Also featured is a textless story from Dan Dav, "Flight".

GRAVEDIGGER'S BANQUET

LOOK, BOYS AND GIRLS! I DO YOU
SEE, FUNNY OLD MR. GRAVE-
DIGGER IN THIS PICTURE? THAT'S
RIGHT! HE IS THE MAN WITH
THE BIG SHOVEL. MR. GRAVE-
DIGGER WORKS HARD ALL DAY,
DIG DIG DIG, (HEY, BIG A
HOLE CAN YOU DIG)

KEEP
OUT

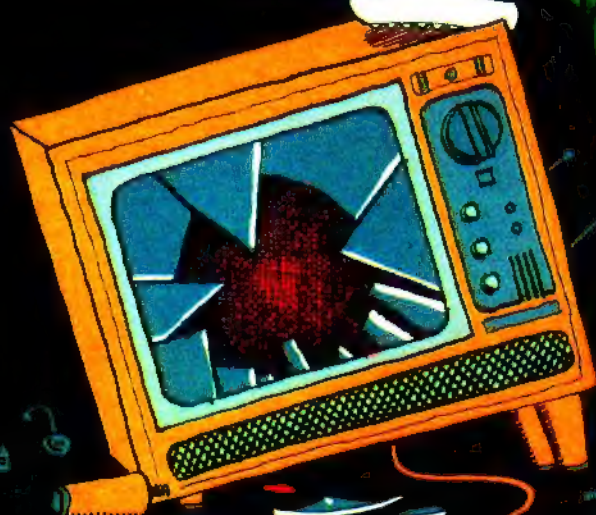


48 pages

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MATRIX
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